

Summer 2019

THE WILDSIDE

A newsletter for the supporters of the International Wildlife Refuge Alliance and the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge



IN THIS ISSUE

***2019 Friend of the Refuge Award Recipients
Annual Benefit Dinner Recap
Eagle Banding on the Refuge!***



The Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR)

is located along the lower Detroit River and western shoreline of Lake Erie. Established in 2001 as the first International Wildlife Refuge in North America, it includes islands, coastal wetlands, marshes, shoals, and waterfront lands along 48 miles of shoreline. Its unique location in a large urban area allow significant opportunities for the public to experience fish, wildlife and plants in their natural habitat.

The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) is a 501 (c) (3) nonprofit organization- a "Friends" organization that works to support the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service in the development of the DRIWR. We invite you to become a supporter of IWRA .

Visit iwralliance.org, www.fws.gov/refuge/detroit_river and www.drhawkwatch.org for more periodic updates.

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Andrew Newton • Biological Technician
Vince Ziols • Transportation Fellow

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A Message from the Alliance Chair

On February 26, 2019, I was in Washington D.C. testifying before a Congressional Subcommittee concerning the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge thanks to an invitation from the National Wildlife Refuge Association.

This, unbeknownst to me at the time, coincided with the bipartisan passage of the John D. Dingell Jr. Conservation, Management and Recreation Act sponsored by Senator Lisa Murkowski of Alaska as a tribute to the late, great Congressman.

We owe him so much. His Legacy on the Detroit River and so many other places will live on forever. It is now our solemn duty to carry on what he so dearly cherished.

Richard Micka, Chair
International Wildlife Refuge Alliance Board



Mr. Micka Goes To Washington



Mr. Micka visited the White House while in Washington D.C. Photo: Richard Micka

Advocacy, speaking on the behalf of or in support of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) and the National Wildlife Refuge System (NWRS), is a key role IWRA as a Friends Organization.

Mr. Micka presented to the committee the significance of an investment in the DRIWR as an investment in our communities. Today, 80% of all U.S. citizens live in an urban area. Many urban residents are disconnected from the natural world and that is why it is so exciting to see the growth and development of the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge and how it is making natural experiences part of everyday urban life.

Making nature a part of everyday urban life develops the next generation of conservationists.



From the Refuge Administrator Susan White

Spring on the Refuge is beautiful...the warmth of the sun on our backs, the songs of birds in the morning light, fisherfolk floating down the river hopeful for the next great catch. In this time of renewal I find myself taking stock as I round out my first year as Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge Manager.

There are two themes that really stick out in my mind: partners and passion. I suspect our network of partnerships may seem like second nature to most readers, but as a newbie to DRIWR I can say the partnerships of the Refuge are truly astounding. The association of such a diverse group is a model for the nation and one for which we can all be proud.

Think about it. This Refuge is privileged to have motivated local, county, and state agencies; involved local citizens; supportive and active native peoples; committed international colleagues; an engaged and helpful business community; dedicated and creative private organizations; devoted volunteers; and more. Few public lands across the nation can boast of such widespread connections! Our partners share a vision for connecting people with nature and creating green space for a healthy, productive lifestyles, and economic opportunities. And, together we are making a difference.

It is this community of practice that bands together and is getting things done by relying upon each other's strengths to meet the shared vision. But "partnerships" is just a word until coupled with the passion and dedication that are put into each of the projects and relationships. Every day our staff and partners demonstrate a commitment to each other and a sincere passion for the work and community as we go about our collective efforts to conserve resources, connect with our communities, and build the economy.

We have beautiful natural resources at the Refuge - and throughout the river communities - that inspire such passion, give a sense of place, and nurture this sense of stewardship to care for it. We can all be proud and grateful to be a part of something that inspires such dedication from so many.

The last few months have shown many inspiring examples of our network of passionate partners working together: the recent dedication of the final connection of the Downriver Linked Greenways Trail; employees from DTE and Solutia clearing trails at Humbug Marsh; spring invasive species surveys within the Cooperative Weed Management Areas; habitat and trail management with stewardship crews; volunteers meeting to "test drive" a new Volunteer Handbook; celebrating another successful year with IWRA at the Annual Benefit Dinner and help present the annual John D. Dingell Jr. Refuge Awards. There are too many instances to mention in this small space but the collective result of it all is apparent everywhere!

As warmer weather beckons us outdoors into nature, let's enjoy each moment. Winter cold will be back soon enough, but today it's time to celebrate the warmth and beauty around us. I hope to meet you outside too!



Refuge Staff and Volunteers from Eastman Chemical/Solutia at Humbug Marsh on Earth Day.
Photo: FWS



Annual Benefit Dinner Recap



The International Wildlife Refuge Alliance (IWRA) celebrated the continued support for the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge (DRIWR) with its annual benefit dinner Saturday, April 6th. This sold out event was held in the Refuge community of Wyandotte at the Bentley Banquet and Conference Center.

Friend of the Refuge Awards

On Thursday, March 28th three John D. Dingell Friend of the Refuge Awards were given in recognition of leadership and dedication to conservation on the Detroit River and western Lake Erie Basin. Presentation of awards was held in the Gibraltar City Hall, Gibraltar, MI. In attendance was Callie Bruley, District Director representing Congresswoman Debbie Dingell. Ms. Bruley presented each honoree with a Certificate of Congressional Recognition, signed by Congresswoman Debbie Dingell.

2019 Individual Friend of the Refuge Award recipient is Jerry Jourdan

Jerry became hooked on birding in 1980 and has since developed a passion for bird photography and digiscoping (photographing birds with a spotting scope and digital camera). Professionally, Jerry is a senior microscopist for the Analytics Department at BASF Corporation with 35 years of experience. In 2010, Jerry was recruited to serve on the advisory committee to assist the FWS in developing a count protocol for the Detroit River Hawk Watch. He leads the way on daily data management, season summary reports, annual publications, updates to the website, and brochure content. Jerry also develops Hawk Watch outreach and education materials designed to encourage the next generation of curious birders. Jerry shares his incredible photographs of hawks migrating and has compiled hundreds of photographs taken by other volunteers from the Detroit River Hawk Watch Facebook page so that this record can be permanently saved by the refuge. Without Jerry's involvement, the Detroit River Hawk Watch would require a tremendous amount time from the Refuge staff.



Joann Van Aken, IWRA Executive Director; Callie Bruley, District Director Representing Congresswoman Debbie Dingell; Jerry Jourdan; Richard Micka, IWRA Chair; and Susan White, Refuge Manager. Photo: Mark Messer

2019 Friend of the Refuge Award recipient is Lake Erie Metropark

Lake Erie Metropark is the southern-most park in the Huron-Clinton Metropolitan Authority, situated between the mouths of the Detroit and Huron Rivers and the shore of Lake Erie- right in the heart of DRIWR. The 1,607-acre park encourages conservation and outdoor recreation for all ages. Lake Erie Metropark is designated as an "Important Bird Area" and boasts some of the best views for hawk migration in North America. Every year from September through November, the Metropark provides the location and access for Detroit River Hawk Watch (DRHW). They are active in the DRHW Outreach and Steering Committees and host Hawk Fest, a family-friendly event that educates the public about hawk migration.

As partners of the Detroit River-Western Lake Erie Cooperative Weed Management Area, the Metropark expands the area of impact against invasive plant species by coordinating survey and treatment of their property and assisting with equipment storage and maintenance. Without the Metropark, the fight against highly invasive plant species in SE Michigan would be much more difficult.



Front Row: Callie Bruley; Jennifer Jaworski, Chief of Interpretive Services; Amy McMillan, Director; Kevin Arnold, District Interpretive Services Supervisor; Nina Kelly, Chief of Planning and Development; and Susan White. Back Row: Joann Van Aken; Paul Cypher, Interpreter; Ryan Colliton, Chief of Natural Resources and Regulatory Compliance; Jerry Cyr, Southern District Park Superintendent, and Richard Micka,. Photo: Mark Messer.

2019 Friend of the Refuge Award recipient is the City of Trenton, Michigan

As a Refuge Gateway community, The City of Trenton has been a key partner in the success of the refuge and has provided support in many capacities. During the ongoing construction process, the City voluntarily provided in-kind professional services and guidance from the Engineering Staff and Department of Public Service. Their partnership and commitment continues with the West Jefferson Avenue Trail Connector which was completed last fall. It was funded in part through the Federal Lands Access Program with match dollars from the FWS, and project coordination through the City of Trenton. Additionally, their Parks and Recreation Director currently serves on the IWRA Board, providing an important link to aid in coordination and development of programs and projects.

IWRA is proud to have the City of Trenton as a Refuge Gateway Community and is looking forward to expanding our partnership as the refuge gateway becomes a destination point for thousands of annual visitors.

Donor Recognition

Eagle Sponsors:

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DTE Energy
ITC Transmission Company

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Consumers Energy

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Pointe Mouillee Waterfowl Festival
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Susan White
Dick Whitwam
Paige Wigren ~
Great Lakes Bakeology



Front Row: Joann Van Aken; Callie Bruley; Joann Gonyea, Parks and Recreation Director; Kyle Stack, Mayor; and Susan White. Back Row: Paul Haley, Emergency Management Coordinator; Scott Church, City Administrator; Bob Howey, City Councilman; and Richard Micka. Photo: Mark Messer.



Many Thanks To Our Summer Interns



Araceli Morales-Santos

After graduating from Wake Forest University, I taught English in Brazil and worked as an environmental education instructor in North Carolina. Later, I interned with the non-profit organization Environment for the Americas and the Siuslaw National Forest to build awareness about migratory bird conservation. I am currently pursuing a graduate degree in Conservation Ecology at the University of Michigan's School for Environment and Sustainability.

My goal is to empower underrepresented communities with the tools and knowledge necessary for them to become stewards of their natural resources. I am committed to creating a more "sustainable and just world" through community engagement and outdoor education to achieve biodiversity conservation for the benefit of people and the environment. I am really looking forward to my time at the refuge this summer and to be working with the wonderful staff here. Most importantly, I am excited to share the refuge's unique natural wonders with communities everywhere!

De'Asia Clark

I grew up in New Haven, MI and graduated from Eastern Michigan University with my B.S. in Biology (cellular molecular concentration). My love for the outdoors was rekindled during an ecology class in my last year at EMU and I realized I could have a career doing something that I actually loved. I was fortunate to acquire an internship through the SCA with Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge. My internship will be mainly focusing on community outreach, which is something I find very important in conservation.

Through my internship many of my personal goals crossover with tasks that I will be doing during my stay at Detroit River. I care very deeply for the environment and the power we have in the future of the planet and want to spark the change in someone else to care about the environment as deeply as I do. I hope to gain long-lasting relationships, as well as a better understanding on how to connect and inspire others.



Biological Technician: Andrew Newton

I grew up and went to school in Canton, MI and while I always had an interest in nature, I never knew what types of careers there were until later in college. And now, as a recent graduate of UM-Dearborn with an environmental studies degree, I am excited to begin working at the Refuge as a biological technician. Through a previous internship, I was able to survey many of the southeastern Michigan Metroparks over the 2018 summer and that is when I realized how much I enjoyed working outside and getting to see the lesser known sides of nature. I always wanted a career in the public field to benefit the surrounding community.

Andrew will join the invasive species crew this summer to survey and treat invasive plants on the Refuge.



Eagle Banding On The Refuge

Thomas Kachelmeyer, Nature and Wildlife Photographer/USFWS Volunteer

Researchers from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, University of Maryland, and the Michigan Department of Environmental Quality assess the health of the bald eagle chicks (or eaglets) along the Detroit River International Wildlife Refuge corridor every spring as part of a monitoring program that has been conducted for almost 20 years. This long-term data provides insight into the overall environmental health and status of the aquatic ecosystem.

On this day, the team had identified a specific bald eagle nest that was located just off Lake Erie. The nest was somewhat easy to get to by the professional climber as the foliage was only just beginning to erupt. The team took the upmost caution in the care of the eaglet through this process, which took about 90 minutes to complete.



A professional climber with experience in banding climbs the tree and retrieves an eaglet.



The eaglet is carefully transferred to a nylon sack and lowered to the team waiting on the ground.



Biologists measure the talons. Eaglet talons can be up to 1.5 inches and between the bottommost talon and the top can be between 8 – 8.5 inches!



A USFWS band is secured onto the eaglet's leg and additional measurements are taken to help biologists determine the age and sex of the young birds.



The process is completed and the eaglet is inserted back into the nylon sack. Once raised back to the climber, the eaglet is carefully put back into the nest.

IN MEMORIUM

JOHN D. DINGELL JR.
JULY 8, 1926 – FEBRUARY 7, 2019



WWW.IWRALLIANCE.ORG
IWR_ALLIANCE@YAHOO.COM

JOHN D. DINGELL SPENT HIS CAREER TAKING CARE OF PEOPLE AND WILDLIFE. HE ENVISIONED NATURAL AREAS PROTECTED FOR ALL TO ENJOY AND THRIVE IN. PLACES WHERE THEY COULD FOREVER CONNECT AND RECHARGE, AND IN DOING SO THEY WOULD BE ADVOCATES AND STEWARDS FOR ITS PERPETUAL CARE.

THIS WAS THE VISION AND PASSION THAT JOHN BROUGHT WHEN HE CREATED THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE. IT BECAME A PLACE WHERE HE WOULD COME TO FIND HIS CALM, HIS SANCTUARY; THE PLACE WHERE HE COULD FIND PEACE FROM THE STRESS OF CAPITOL HILL. HE WAS OFTEN HEARD TO SAY: "WE DO NOT INHERIT THIS EARTH FROM OUR ANCESTORS; WE BORROW IT FROM OUR CHILDREN." NATIVE PROVERB.

THE INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE ALLIANCE WOULD LIKE TO SINCERELY SAY THANK YOU TO ALL WHO HAVE GIVEN DONATIONS TO THE IWRA LEGACY ENDOWMENT IN HONOR OF MR. DINGELL. THE ENDOWMENT HELPS ENSURE A LONG-TERM MECHANISM TO OPERATE, MAINTAIN, AND PROGRAM THE FACILITIES AND HABITATS, AND WILL SUPPORT THE MISSION OF THE DETROIT RIVER INTERNATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE TO PROVIDE QUALITY CONSERVATION AND OUTDOOR RECREATIONAL EXPERIENCES FOR YEARS TO COME.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE IWRA LEGACY ENDOWMENT IN MEMORY OF JOHN D. DINGELL, JR. PLEASE CONTACT THE IWRA OFFICE AT 734-755-0490 OR WWW.IWRALLIANCE.ORG.



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